

Four Delaware Organizations Receive Mini-Grants to Reduce Infant and Maternal Mortality Among Black Population

NEW CASTLE (Jan. 25, 2021) – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) and the Delaware Healthy Mother and Infant Consortium (DHMIC) awarded mini-grants totaling more than \$145,500 to four local organizations to help reduce disparate birth outcomes and save infant and maternal lives.

The grantees – who will be honored during the consortium’s quarterly meeting March 3 – are Parent Information Center, Rose Hill Community Center, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, and Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware.

All four grantees are dedicated to supporting the shared initiative of DPH and DHMIC to:

- Narrow the wide variance in poor birth outcomes between Black women and White women;
- Build state and local capacity and test small-scale innovative strategies;
- Improve public and professional awareness of the issues related to improving maternal health outcomes before, during and after pregnancies, especially for women of color.

“Every Delawarean has a role to play in decreasing the Black infant and maternal mortality rate, and our community knows best how to connect with and empower women to be healthy to improve outcomes for moms and babies,” said Dr. David Paul, DHMIC Co-Chair. “The consortium has undertaken an aggressive initiative to examine the social determinants of health by taking a life-course approach to both understanding and

addressing the disparities that have led to the rise in Black maternal and infant mortality in Delaware.”

DPH and DHMIC assessed each candidate’s program based on a number of criteria, all of which needed to support results-driven strategies and implementation in at least one of five priority areas. High-risk infant and maternal mortality zones established by DPH’s Healthy Women Healthy Babies (HWHB) program also were considered. HWHB’s five priority areas are: social networking for empowerment; father/partner involvement and engagement; toxic stress/adverse childhood experiences; financial empowerment/self-sufficiency; and housing.

“It’s time to give Black and Brown women and expectant mothers of Delaware a voice in deciding what is best for them by working alongside the health care community. This is a movement whose time has come,” said Tiffany Chalk, DHMIC’s Well Woman/Black Maternal Health Group Leader. “Our mission is to share Black and Brown women’s health care experiences as a mechanism to inspire change and close the disparities gap. With DHMIC’s support, we will collaborate with community partners and leverage the needed resources to sustain our efforts. Silence is no longer an option. As the collective voices of Black and Brown women grow stronger, so does our opportunity to bring about permanent change.”

Disparities in Delaware

Statistics reinforce the need in Delaware for programs to mobilize communities and partners to educate and motivate target populations to embrace healthier behaviors before, during, and after pregnancy. According to Delaware’s Child Death Review Committee and DPH:

- Black women made up one of every four women giving birth in Delaware between 2011 and 2018 but made up 50 percent of the mothers who died.
- In 2018, Delaware’s Black infant mortality rate was 12.5

infant deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to the White infant mortality rate of 5.1 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

- Black babies in Delaware are 2.7 times more likely than White babies to die before their first birthday.

In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that in 2018, the infant mortality rate in the United States was 5.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, with the rate for Blacks (10.8) more than twice that for Whites (4.6).

“Delaware is committed to developing a multi-faceted approach to addressing persistent and dire health disparities and the social determinants of health, the conditions under which people live, work and play,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “We are hopeful that our place-based and community-driven approach will help close this pervasive disparity gap for women and babies.”

The grant recipients and their funded programs are:

Parent Information Center

Doula Program

Established more than 35 years ago, Parent Information Center provides tools for parents, caregivers and advocates of children to secure appropriate education and related services. They serve 2,000 families and professionals annually and will use their grant to provide prenatal and postpartum support by creating a community-based doula program in the Seaford area of Sussex County (19973 ZIP code). Parent Information Center will train six doulas who will provide non-clinical emotional, physical and informational support to potentially 20 to 30 women before, during and after labor and birth. The program will also provide virtual training in partnership with community organizations on childbirth education, breastfeeding initiation, prenatal nutrition, healthy family relationships and community supports; empower women to be their own self

advocates; provide one-on-one coaching calls with pregnant women prenatal and postpartum starting six weeks before due date and continuing six weeks postpartum; offer postpartum support groups with other new parents as well as breakout sessions on breastfeeding, sexuality, mental health and infant development; and create an awareness campaign focused on prenatal and postpartum support.

Rose Hill Community Center

Stress Relief Program

The mission of Rose Hill Community Center is to build strong individuals, families and communities by addressing the educational, recreational and social well-being of their neighboring communities. The center will use its grant funding to address toxic stress, which during the coronavirus pandemic has led to fear and anxiety and has caused residents in their service area to be overwhelmed and feel isolated and lonely. Rose Hill's program will serve women ages 15 to 44 in New Castle's 19720 ZIP code and Wilmington's 19801 area by providing free mental health workshops led by psychologists and psychiatrists twice a month covering the following topics: feelings of isolation, depression, self-care, setting boundaries, stress and knowing your triggers. Rose Hill will provide lessons on reducing stress, breathing sessions, mindfulness training and journaling. They will also provide massage therapy and stretching techniques as well as yoga lessons. The organization expects to serve 40 to 50 women under this program and will measure success using the Perceived Stress Scale before and after the program.

Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League

Doula Training Program

Working since July 1999 to empower people of color through civil rights, the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League will serve as a fiscal agent for Black Mothers In Power (BMIP), a

grassroots organization. Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League will use grant money to provide and sponsor a doula training program and train 10 Black women to become trained and certified doulas through the National Black Doula Association. The organization will train five doulas in New Castle County and five in Kent County and will focus on engaging at-risk pregnant women who live in high-risk zones. Each doula will help women during pregnancy, birth and postpartum, and early parenting, serving potentially 45 women during the period of the grant.

Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware

Breastfeeding Support

Through its funded program, the Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware will provide breastfeeding support groups to women in high-risk zones of Wilmington, Claymont and Seaford. It will offer accessible support, engaging groups, text check-ins, access to variable levels of lactation support and incentives for participation. In addition, the organization will hire three diverse breastfeeding peer counselors and one lactation consultant to provide support to women. At the completion of the program the Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware will host a baby shower for participants to provide supplies, education and support.

For more information, visit DEThrives.com.

About the Delaware Healthy Mother and Infant Consortium:

In 2005, the Delaware Infant Mortality Task Force's final report put forth a three-year plan with 20 recommendations to reduce the high infant mortality rate in Delaware. The plan called for the creation of the Delaware Healthy Mother and Infant Consortium to help ensure that stated directives were put into place. The directives include coordinating efforts to address disparities related to the health of infants and women of childbearing age, and facilitating collaborative

partnerships among public health agencies, hospitals, health care practitioners and other interested agencies and organizations to carry out recommended infant mortality improvement strategies.